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**GOOD GUY, BAD SEX?**

PHOTOGRAPH BY [unreadable]

**ELLE BEAUTY OBSESSION**

**NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND**

From sniffing parties to eau-inspired vacations, perfume is more than just a daily spritz for a new breed of fragrance fanatics—it's an art. And, in some cases, a full-blown obsession. By Maggie Bullock

It's not hard to come up with a reason to linger at the Four Seasons Resort on Maui's Wailea Beach: white sand fine as face powder; the possible mango smoothies; and the occasional sight of Pierce Brosnan gliding to shore on a publicized fragrance launch with more than 1,000 bottles. Another reason: he's a new bottle of our Savoir—the \$180—once a month. I'm not complaining, but it's, like, what, are you thinking? If Hendifler stirred up a possible version, they just might. A new class of fragrance consumer is mushrooming faster than you can say "World's Wildest Web": perfume fanatics, superfanatics who collect, study, debate, and advise every one they can get their hands on. They seek out exotic notes, celebrate superior dry-downs, lust sniffing parties, and swap notes of their latest discoveries. Perfumers—once an anonymous breed tucked away behind the bellhops and beehived boxes of fragrance marketing campaigns—are their Picasso. Rob-

son's beauty flour is their MoMA. "They're like wine lovers, cheese lovers, car enthusiasts," says Fion Robertson, the owner of Apothica, the luxury boutique in L.A.'s celeb-befriended Hollywood and the innovator behind its cult, eponymous fragrance collection. "They love anything that's going on, olfactory-wise." Selling in three requires more than waving a scent strip under their ultra-animated noses. "This isn't like trying to explain the difference between grapefruit and patchouli," he says. "They want to know the nuances: Does grapefruit come into play in the beginning or end? What is the balance?"

The answer to the obvious question—if fragrance has been around for centuries, why now?—is the same reason a million other seemingly unique hobbies suddenly belong to 10,000 million fans: the Internet. On blogs like Nowonobility, BondageJunkies, PerfumePulse, and countless others, previously isolated fragrance freaks have found a beating community. "That started a whole new culture," Rob-

**ELLE BEAUTY OBSESSION**

son says. "Like a book club, you get new perspectives. You increase your knowledge."

Knowledge is equally active about the appointment of Thierry Waese, Gardiner's new CEO, as it is about, say, the recent, unexpected resignation of a little-known Chanel juicer called Beige. Sounded by Coty along with Rouge and Blue back in 1993, but apparently not forgotten.

The Web also provides common ground for an obsession that nonfanatics might regard as, er, unusual. When a writer on Nowonobility conducted an experiment to see how much perfume he owned, spritz for spritz, he figured that, at 233 sprays per 50 milliliter bottle, his relatively conservative 27-bottle stash was enough to provide 14.5 years of daily doses. "When I first did these calculations, I spent several days in a semi-depressed state," he writes. "How could I resist buying more perfumes?" His online cohorts were quick to assuage his guilt—277 Next to nothing. Think of what footwear fanatics spend on a lunch of meringues and shortbread—and the conversation quickly moved to how to best store the bottles you have, while continuing to purchase more. One said her 150-plus bottles were in the fridge, while "hundreds of samples and decants are in drawers in my bedroom, organized in alphabetical and size groups."

For some fragrance fanatics, scent is simply the sense with which they compute everyday life; its impact on their experiences—processed in the hippocampus, the brain's memory bank, and the amygdala, its emotional control panel—more instrumental than intellectual. A nostalgic 70-year-old commissioned Jane Handwerker create the discontinued doses of her youth, including one that, "when she wore it down the street, made men turn their heads and kil-

low her," Hendifler says. Robertson remembers the Bay Area his grandfather wore in the '50s and recalls meeting his wife while wearing the British brand Church & Spence. (Apothica still sells it.) Others just seem to have been gifted with superior sniffers. Why else can certain noses discern Asprey versus Armani on a morning subway commute, while others detect life more than one deodorant? Hendifler says most immediately drifts her to the right brain, into a spacy, creative mode. "Some people get almost high. They find it transporting, disorienting. They could dance right off the curb," she says. "That's what they love about it."

"It would be wonderful to have an orchestra follow an around all day and play a movie soundtrack to match our mood," says Tania Sanchez, who, along with her fragrance (and life) partner, perfume critic Luca Turin, wrote the 2008 scent fantastic bible, *Perfume: The Guide* (Viking). "Hearing perfume is a little bit like that. It occurs the day. It makes breathing, ordinarily a purely functional thing, bring a little bit of beauty into you with each breath."

Sanchez is the perfect example of an Internet-affected aficionado. When she stumbled upon the fragrance boards at Makeupalley.com, she had just a small collection. Now she owns some 2,300. (OK, correct, she's quick to point out, "I needed those to write the book.")

"The thing about perfume is that, for most of us who like it, it's been difficult to tell anybody why," Sanchez says. "Thanks to the Crystal ball, you've got these weird 11-year-olds who know the difference between laurel stems and rose amber. But they don't know if something smells like fennel as opposed to, say, oak moss. One of the joys of getting online was getting this vocabulary and being able to talk about something you

**MASTERPIECE THEATER**

**FLORAL**

From single-note noseays to complex bouquets, floral fragrances are as varied as, well, flowers themselves. On its sixtieth birthday, Robert Piguet's FRACAS is still the supreme tuberose. With hints of orange blossom and woods, "It's the little black dress of fragrance—the most chic," says Robert Gervais of Aedes de Venustia. TRY ALSO: The original aldehyde in a bright, clean chemical note, CHANEL NO. 5.

and Parfum Dubois's line de Paris ("like candlelight in a jar").

Scuffalopoulos started six years ago when Dubois organized a Bergdorf's sale for his close friends. Now his network is 500,000 strong. Believers fly in from Germany, Switzerland, and France for Scuffalopoulos events. And while the Karms started out peddling adding perfumes and fragrance companions for face time and products, now the industry comes to them. On their last major tour, in Florence, Adams says, "We got the royal treatment," bookshelved at Fresco's residential palace; chocolate mini tipples and an all-access tour at Santa Maria Novella; Catherine de' Medici's favorite, in-laid chokolates at the farm that produces powdery bulbs for the boutique brand Profumi de Firenze; and a custom-blending lesson with celebrated Italian blender Laura Tomaso.

The Scuffalopoulos as Hendifler calls fragrance disciples aren't just along for the ride, either. "They do their research," says Robert Gervais, the co-owner of Aedes de Venustia. "They have color-coded files, spreadsheets, and pages of everything they plan to smell at each stop. They're not going home saying, 'Oh, I forgot to smell this one!'"

The Karms insist that, to Scuffalopoulos, perfume is an art, without distinctions of high and low—whether the box is embellished with inlaid Op or bears Hillary Duff's face. "We're not snobs," Dubois says, wistfully. "We want to smell every-

**MASTERPIECE THEATER**

**FLORAL**

FRACAS by Robert Piguet is a classic tuberose fragrance. TRY ALSO: Aedes de Venustia's Aedes de Venustia.

**CITRUS**

FRAGRANCE by Robert Gervais is a classic citrus fragrance. TRY ALSO: Aedes de Venustia's Aedes de Venustia.

**FOURMUND**

FRAGRANCE by Robert Gervais is a classic floral fragrance. TRY ALSO: Aedes de Venustia's Aedes de Venustia.

**ORIENTAL**

FRAGRANCE by Robert Gervais is a classic oriental fragrance. TRY ALSO: Aedes de Venustia's Aedes de Venustia.

**INDEPENDENT SPIRITS**

The best scents you've never heard of—yet

FRAGRANCE by Robert Gervais is a classic floral fragrance. TRY ALSO: Aedes de Venustia's Aedes de Venustia.

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